

An Overview of the Revival of Local Cultural Identities in the Context of Globalization

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Abstract: In the process of globalization, the differences between different regions have gradually narrowed. At the same time, however, some local cultural identities have also been revived by the momentum of globalization. Meanwhile, conflicts between different cultures have also been accelerated with the revival of different cultural identities, bringing many social problems and thus making people reconsider the influences of cultural revivals. This paper is mainly focused on how some local cultural identities have been revived instead of being assimilated into dominant cultures in terms of languages, traditional costumes, and dietary habits in the context of globalization. At the same time, with the hope for more peaceful cultural revival programs, it also points out how some problems arising with the process of cultural identity revival have threatened global security.

Keywords: Revival; Cultural Identity; Tradition; Globalization

1. Introduction

Advanced technology has enabled people with different cultural backgrounds interact with each other more easily, whereas the cultural diversity instead of similarity has been enhanced, or in other words, people in the context of globalization become more aware of their own cultural identities than before. With communication technology rapidly developing, people are benefited from the fruitful outputs of telecommunication and information explosion, and thus form a better understanding of their own cultures and traditional practices. Meanwhile, openness to cross-border information and multinational interaction which might be challenging to traditional values and practices in conservative states have now become a catalyst for the reawakening of local culture and values.

Besides, if the beginning of globalization is traced back to the opening of the new sea route, it will be found that the starting point and later development of globalization was accompanied by military conquest. In this process, the conquered regions were not only brought with advanced technology and modern ideologies but also cultural invasion. For example, hundreds of indigenous languages in Latin America are facing linguistic extinction and endangerment [1]. So, after the year of 1945, the independence of many countries of the Third World came up with the reconstruction and revival of local cultural identities to form their own national consciousness.

Identity is not a single identity, but a combination of multiple identities that have been operated in combination based on the social context or situation. Since it involves many aspects, it seems to be reasonable that the differences in the aspects of cultural identities will gradually disappear with the process of globalization. There, however, is no denying that the contemporary world social order is increasingly characterized by multiculturalism, and globalization does not appear to be producing a culturally homogenized global society. In addition, the revival of cultural identities has also caused many problems which many countries should take into consideration seriously. The phenomenon of reviving local cultural identities with its subsequent influences will be discussed in the following section.

2. The Revival of Local Cultural Identities

Cultural identity is defined by various interacting factors, for example, region, gender, nationality, language, aesthetics and even dietary habit [2]. Globalization has made some cultural identities more heterogeneous to a great extent and thus contributed to the revival of cultural identities. The next part will discuss

the revival of local cultural identities in terms of some factors abovementioned.

2.1 The Revival of Languages and Dialects

Modern Hebrew is widely recognized as a successful case of the movement of the revival of languages. However, modern Hebrew is actually a mixed languages with components derived from the old Hebrew and many other modern languages, not the independently evolved descendent of the old Hebrew [3]. So, such a newly revived language is characterized by mixed features of multiple languages. The language enlarged its vocabulary by borrowing words from German, Russian, Polish, Yiddish and Arabic etc.

After the revival of Hebrew, much work was done for the modernization of Hebrew vocabulary. Since loanwords play a key role in the process of language change and lexical evolution, the committee of Hebrew language formulate such regulations for the use and translation of foreign words that people could borrow words from other languages if there is no counterpart in Hebrew [4]. It, therefore, can be said that modern Hebrew itself is the product of globalization and international immigration.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the Irish language faced its demise due to the long period of British rule of Ireland. The Irish have worked tirelessly for many years to save their language. On the April, 2019, the department of education of Ireland launched a pilot project named “e-Hub” with the aim to establishing an e-school or virtual classrooms to extend the curriculum with Irish as teaching language. This innovative project will provide Irish students more opportunities to take more online courses with Irish as intermediate language [5], and enable young Irish speak bilingually to adapt themselves to the future progress of Irish economy. In addition, some online platforms for language learning have also greatly contributed to the revival of the Irish language. Up to now, the total number of Irish learners on Duolingo has exceeded that of native Irish speakers.

Apart from Duolingo, there are some applications specifically designed for dialect learning. An application called “Jiaxianghua” was designed to protect and help people better speak Changsha dialect [6]. And many short videos dubbed in dialects are also very popular

and widespread on the Internet. In recent years, the arise of short video platforms have contributed to the spread of dialects and significantly improved people’s awareness of the importance of their own dialects. Besides, the revival of Māori language in New Zealand, Walsh language in Wales [7], and the aboriginal languages in Latin America [8] was also promoted and accelerated by the growth of Internet because online resources are more accessible and the combination of online and offline teaching is more attractive to young people.

Existing language revival movements have proven that small investments in language revival can be very rewarding [9]. And the revival movement of some endangered languages could learn from the experience of the Hebrew revival. Besides, globalization with technical exchanges might offer new approaches to achieving the goal of language revivals. More efforts in the future should be devoted with the help of technical progress.

2.2 The Revival of Traditional Costumes

The evolution of national costume refers to a series of changes that occur under the action of varying factors in the formation, development and circulation of the costumes of specific ethnic groups, which is the most common phenomenon in the history of the development of human costumes [10]. In the development of a nation, national costumes often participate in the links and exchanges between nationalities, and it is precisely this connection and exchange as a channel that promotes the cultural identity. Cheongsam is one of the examples of interactions between China and the west. It combines western tailoring and traditional Chinese costumes.

Another evidence is embodied in the quick development of the Internet. The revival of Han costumes was first organized on different online platforms. In the context of globalization, more people become more aware of the differences among countries and start to reorient themselves in terms of their characteristics. Then the Han costume becomes the best choice to display the majority’s characteristics. The activists of the “Hanfu Movement” are mainly young people, and most of them are “netizens”. They call themselves “Han enthusiasts”, “Hanyou” or “Hanfu netizens” and are active in numerous

“virtual” communities on the Internet, that is, forums, web pages or websites related to “Hanfu” [11]. It can be concluded that the convenient access to the Internet greatly shows the varying features among different ethnic groups, and thus many people are inspired to find and form their own characteristics in terms of traditional clothing. Such a chain reaction accelerates the establishment of traditional aesthetics of clothing, and finally boosts the revival of Hanfu. In the process, the ethnic identity gets strengthened.

In some countries, the process of globalization has not affected the local costume culture, or even been influenced by the local costume. For example, Bengalis still maintain a strong local cultural identity in their clothing, and even have the phenomenon of “reverse shock” [12]. Their traditional clothing has also become the creative inspiration and design element of international haute couture customization, and it is popular for its appearance on the fashion runway in highlighting the national style.

2.3 The Revival of Dietary Habits

French sociologist Fischler once said “Food is the core of our sense of identity” [13]. As eating is an essential human activity required by both the rich and the poor, food appears to be a ready vehicle to express a group’s identity, and this is demonstrated in a Japanese Canadian Christian church in Ontario, at which food continues to occupy a central place in their collective identity formation [14]. In this case, globalization is embodied not only in the migration of Japanese to Canada, but also in the maintaining of their Japanese-style eating habits in a country far away from their homeland.

Sometimes, in these countries that are not of immigrants, the revival of dietary habits could also rise with the benefits of the transportation and the popularization of the Internet. In China, driven by the Internet, the changes in Chinese food culture have been accompanied by the Internet-based development of the catering industry. From the initial review website to the rise and development of such models like group purchase, takeaway, the Internet has continuously changed the eating habits, diet structure and culture of the public, providing the public with a more convenient catering service experience, and helping catering companies to improve operational efficiency

[15]. The unification of the various local cuisines in China has made the dietary habits homogeneous, but such phenomenon has also raised people’s concerns about how they could find their own flavor and maintain their own system of local cuisine. In recent years, short video platforms have risen, and traditional diets around the country are also well known through the form of short videos. In this process, people take the initiative to share the local food culture, which promotes the revival of the local food culture to a certain extent. With the local food culture promoted, people’s cultural identities get enhanced and strengthened. In addition, many time-honored Chinese food and beverages in the era of globalization have increasingly become a new strategic industry for the nation because of their good internal mechanisms and reputable brands [16]. This also suggests that the local cultural identities have also been reestablished in the context of globalization.

3. Problems Arising from Cultural Identity Revival

Globalization and cultural integration have formed a global social field, but conflicts between different civilizations are likely to intensify [17]. And the revival of local cultural identities in many aspects have also caused a lot of social problems.

The cultural influence of some countries is inherently stronger than others, which can lead to unilateral cultural exports from culturally strong countries to culturally weak ones in the name of globalization. To some extent, “globalization” seems to have become a trend, but the world communication structure is still unequal, so when describing the trend of world communication, replacing “cultural centralism” with “globalization” is the shading of the communication of inequality. And the revival of local cultural identities in developed countries may fuel their own values, which in turn continues to influence other countries through globalization. So, it’s worth elaborately considering that how could some countries not capable enough to expand their own influences resist such kind of unilateral cultural influence and how could they balance globalization and national consciousness.

This kind of imbalance manifests itself in many ways. For example, the flow of information between developed and

developing countries is uneven. Critics see this as potential threat implemented through electronic media, with developed countries exporting massive amounts of media products to developing countries in one direction.

The media content exported by developed countries reflects the values of their own. When audiences in developing countries consume media products in developed countries, they will inevitably accept the values of developed countries. For example, in American TV shows that dominate the Latin American market [18], there is a large amount of explicit and implicit biased imagery: 75% of middle-class characters are positive images, and only 15% of the working-class have a positive image; the purpose of life is money, fame, beauty, health and pleasure.

All of these issues associated with cultural influence from other countries should be carefully coped with when some countries are actively interacted with the mainstream of globalization, and the revival of local cultural identities in developed countries should be more carefully treated.

4. Conclusion

The revival of local cultural identities has been overviewed in some aspects like language, clothing, and dietary habits. For the revival of languages, Hebrew is commonly recognized as the most successfully revived language, and its success could be attributed to a great extent to globalization, because modern Hebrew was reconstructed and selected as the national language to unite the various ethnic groups from different countries, whereas the Irish language, or Irish Gaelic, now has more online projects to help it become more widespread among Irish young people. As in the case of the traditional Han costume, the awareness of ethnic features was actually activated for the first time on the Internet. And the globalization with advanced technology and more convenient transportation does not make dietary habits more homogenous. These are all demonstrations of the revivals of local cultural identities.

In addition to bridging differences and enhancing exchanges, globalization is bound to have a negative impact on some relatively weak countries. There are many problems resulted from and accompanied by globalization. The already existing imbalances

of cultural influence have been exacerbated through the process of globalization, so those countries comparatively less culturally influential might be unwillingly involved in the Westernized mainstream, and keep losing their own cultural identities.

Of course, globalization has brought not only the problems of cultural identities, but also the negative effects involved in all aspects. Any countries should take into consideration how to cope with both the positive and negative aspects in the future process of globalization.

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